

Handout

## **(S)HE WHO LAUGHS, LASTS!**

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Your funny bone's connected to your...well, if you want to get technical about it, the one we accidentally 'whack', is the medial aspect of the distal end of the humerus. That 'funny' sensation we get (which actually hurts), is because we've dinged the ulnar nerve. Anyway, this discussion is not about the humerus—it's about humour.

You've probably known for years that you feel better after a good laugh (that's why most of us shower naked!). The field of psychoneuroimmunology (the study of how the mind helps to heal the body) has, in recent years, been researching the effects of humour on mental and physical health. It's no surprise that laughter and humour have restorative powers for the human body and spirit. It is amazing, however, that their powers are extremely strong, and physiologically measurable.



Professor William Fry, of Stanford University Medical School, states that laughing one hundred times in a day gives you the same cardiovascular workout as ten minutes on the rowing machine. Here's an idea for all you personal trainers: have people laugh at their exercise equipment for ten minutes as a warm-up. You might say, 'No one would do that, exercise equipment isn't funny'. The Thigh Master aside, I agree. However, it doesn't matter whether the laughter is prompted from an actual humorous sight or situation, or whether it's "made up"—it all has the same effect.

Professor Paul Ekman (University of California, San Francisco), has studied the effects of facial expressions on the body. Whether the expression is genuine or mimicked, the effect on skin temperature, heart rate, muscular tension, and brain waves, is the same. In other words, facial expressions don't just reflect what's going on in the body—they can alter our physical state.

You have probably experienced this phenomenon when you have taught a class in less-than-ideal health. You may have been battling the flu, menstrual cramps, or the 'pain in the posterior' that you married or work for. You felt rotten, but had no replacement. So you plastered on your happiest face, mustered all the









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enthusiasm you could, and found that by the end of the class, you were a changed person. Your physical symptoms and emotional lethargy had left. What you had done was to force your face and body language into a happier place, and your physiology followed.

How can we make the best use of our knowledge about mirth? First, take the time to read, use, and share the following 'Fitfacts About Humour'. Then, look for ways to humourize your presentation skills. In addition to the suggestions listed, look for ways to make your cues light and comical. Start or end your class with a 'joke of the day'. Put some 'Fun in Your Fit Tips', by starting with the ones listed, then looking for more of your own.




### FITFACTS ABOUT HUMOUR

-  Norman Cousins used laughter to successfully treat terminally ill patients.
-  Laughter releases endorphins--the body's natural opiates. Therefore, it relieves pain and inhibits our emotional response to pain.
-  Laughter is like internal jogging. The heart, lungs, pancreas, liver, spleen, stomach, and intestines, are all stimulated by laughter!
-  Laughter improves the immune system and increases resistance to disease.
-  Beware of Negative Humour. Cynicism, sarcasm and ridicule have damaging effects on both the giver and the receiver.
-  Anger and humour cannot co-exist. Seeing the humour in a bad situation can force away the negative physiological effects of anger and frustration.
-  The effects of laughter are positive, but temporary. We need to laugh often!
-  People who enjoy and use humour often are far less likely to suffer fatigue, tension, anger, depression, or confusion when confronted with stressful events.



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-  Laughter can free us to consider problems along new, creative lines. When you take time to see the humour in your situation, you buy time and a more relaxed mind-set with which to tackle your problem.
-  Hostility, irritability, explosiveness, competitiveness, and impatience, are found to be excellent predictors of coronary heart disease.
-  Seek out more humour in your life. It will add years to your life and life to your years. Remember:

### Humourizing Your Life










1. Use outrageous metaphors.
2. Exaggerate.
3. Wear humorous jewellery or clothing.
4. Pretend to be what you are not.
5. Take the wrong meaning of a word or phrase, which has several meanings.
6. Say the reverse of what you mean.
7. Make a false analogy.
8. Expose tricks, illusions or hypocrisy.
9. Give unexpected or surprise solutions.
10. Underestimate or understate things.
11. Say totally irrelevant things--create nonsense.
12. Be especially honest when it isn't expected.
13. Perform harmless practical jokes.
14. Be illogical or irrational.
15. Take material out of context.
16. Take conclusions one step further--to the world of the ridiculous.
17. Argue vehemently against an accepted theory.
18. Impersonate a famous person.
19. Use theme events to get everyone in the spirit.





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### **PUT SOME FUN IN YOUR FIT-TIPS!**

-  There ain't much fun in medicine, but there's a heck of lot of medicine in fun!
-  Humour is the shortest distance between two people. When you smile, the world smiles back.
-  Humour allows us to live with the difference between the perfection we seek and the reality we live with. (S)HE WHO LAUGHS, LASTS!
-  A waist is a terrible thing to mind. (S)HE WHO LAUGHS, LASTS!
-  Exercise will put the bloom of youth in your cheeks and the cheeks of youth in your bloomers.
-  You can tell a person's honesty by the zero adjustment on their bathroom scales.
-  Take active living to new heights--dance naked in front of your pets!
-  When life gives you lemons--make lemonade.
-  Understanding and appreciating the beneficial aspects of humour is only a start. To be a serious purveyor of things humorous, you need to be a humour hunter. Collect cartoons, quotes, books, videos, clothes, music, and jewellery that tickle your funny bone. Take time to play. Make time in your schedule to do things that make you smile. Seek out the positives in life. Control your exposure to violent TV, negative people, and nasty news. Immerse yourself in media and activities, which are light-hearted and life affirming.

This doesn't mean that everything is a joke, or that you can't be taken seriously. It means that you will cultivate and hone a wonderful sense of humour, for the health of it.